

ADDRESS

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OF THE

NEW-ENGLAND ANTI-SLAVERY CONVENTION

TO THE

Slaves of the United States;

WITH AN

ADDRESS TO PRESIDENT TYLER;

ADOPTED IN

FANEUIL HALL, MAY 31, 1843.

BOSTON:

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1843.

ADDRESS TO THE SLAVES.

BRETHREN AND FELLOW COUNTRYMEN:

ASSEMBLED in Convention, from all parts of New-England, in Faneuil Hall, the OLD CRADLE OF LIBERTY, in the city of Boston, we, the friends of universal emancipation—the enemies of slavery, whether at home or abroad—your advocates and defenders—would improve this opportunity to address to you words of sympathy, of consolation, of encouragement and hope.

We wish you to know who you are—by whom and for what purpose you were created—who are your oppressors, and what they profess to receive as self-evident truths, in regard to the rights of man—who are your friends, and in what manner they stand ready to aid you—what has been effected in your cause, within the last ten years, in the United States—and what is the prospect of your emancipation from chains and servitude.

In the first place, then, you are men—created in the same divine image as all other men—as good, as noble, as free, by birth and destiny, as your masters—as much entitled to ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,’ as those who cruelly enslave you—made but a little lower than the angels of heaven, and destined to an immortal state of existence—equal members of the great human family. These truths you must believe and understand, if you desire to have your chains broken, and your oppression come to a speedy end.

Know this, also, that God never made a slave master, nor a slave. He abhors cruelty and injustice in every form, and his judgments have been poured out on those nations that have refused to let the oppressed go free. He pities all who are sighing in bondage, and will work out their redemption, at whatever cost to those who are crushing them in the dust. He 'has made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth' — not to war with each other — not to defraud, degrade, torment, persecute, or oppress each other — but to enjoy equal rights and perfect liberty, to love and do good to each other, to dwell together in unity. He is no respecter of persons, but has given to all the stamp of his divinity, and his tender mercies are over all the works of his hands. 'Thus saith the Lord, Execute judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor; and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood.' Such is your Creator, Father, and God.

Your masters say that you are an inferior race; that you were born to be slaves; that it is by the will and direction of God, that you are held in captivity. Your religious teachers declare that the Bible (which they call the word of God) sanctions slavery, and requires you to submit to it as of rightful authority. Believe them not! They all speak falsely, and the truth is not in them. They libel the character of God, and pervert the teachings of the Bible in the most awful manner. They combine to take from you all your hard earnings; they cover your bodies with stripes; they will not allow you to obtain light and knowledge; they call you their property, and sell you and your children at auction, as they do their cattle and swine. If they will steal, will they not lie? Listen not to what they tell you. They are the enemies of God and man. Their religion is of Beelzebub, the prince of devils; not of Jesus, the Son of God. As long as they keep you in slavery, they defy Jehovah, reject Christ, and grieve the Holy Spirit.

God made you to be free — free as the birds that cleave the air, or sing on the branches — free as the sunshine that gladdens the earth — free as the winds that sweep over sea and land ; — free at your birth, free during your whole life, free to-day, this hour, this moment ! He has given you faculties to be improved, and souls to live forever. He has made you to glorify him in your bodies and spirits, to be happy here and hereafter, and not to be a degraded and miserable race. Your masters have no more right to enslave you, than you have to enslave them — to sell your children, and lacerate your bodies, and take your lives, than you have to inflict these outrages on them and theirs. The complexion of your masters is no better than yours — a black skin is as good as a white one. It is for you to say when, or where, or for whom you will work ; where you will go, or in what part of the country or the world you will reside. If your masters prevent you from doing as you wish, they rob you of an inalienable right, and your blood will be required at their hands. If you submit unresistingly to their commands, do it for Christ's sake, (who died the just for the unjust,) and not because they claim a rightful authority over you — for they have no such authority.

Your masters tell us that you do not wish to be free ; that you are contented and happy as slaves ; that you are much attached to their persons, and ready to lay down your lives to save them from harm ; that you have an abundance of good clothes, good food, and all that you need to make your situation comfortable ; that your tasks are light, and easily performed ; and that you are much better off than such of your number as have been liberated from bondage. We do not believe one word that they say. We know, from the natural desire for liberty that burns in the bosom of every human being — from the horribly unjust code of laws by which you are governed — from the attempts of slaves, in all countries, to obtain their freedom by insurrection and massacre —

from the vigilance with which all your movements are watched, as though you only waited for an opportunity to strike an effectual blow for your rights — from the testimony of thousands of slaves, who have escaped to the North and to Canada — from the numerous advertisements, in southern newspapers, of runaways from the plantations — that your masters are trying to deceive us. We are sure that your situation is a dreadful one, and that there is nothing in the world you desire so much as liberty.

We know that you are driven to the field like beasts, under the lash of cruel overseers or drivers, and there compelled to toil from earliest dawn till late at night; that you do not have sufficient clothing or food; that you have no laws to protect you from the most terrible punishment your masters may choose to inflict on your persons; that many of your bodies are covered with scars, and branded with red hot irons; that you are constantly liable to receive wounds and bruises, stripes, mutilations, insults and outrages innumerable; that your groans are borne to us on every southern breeze, your tears are falling thick and fast, your blood is flowing continually; that you are regarded as four-footed beasts and creeping things, and bought and sold with farming utensils and household furniture. We know all these things, and a great deal more, in regard to your condition.

Who, O unhappy countrymen, are your oppressors? They are the descendants of those, who, in 1776, threw off the British yoke, and for seven years waged war against a despotic power, until at length they secured their independence. In a certain Declaration which they published to the world, at that period, and which is now read and subscribed to on the fourth of July annually, they said — ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident — that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness: — That, to secure these rights, governments

are instituted among men, deriving their just powers *from the consent of the governed*; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. . . . When a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is *their right*, it is **THEIR DUTY**, to **THROW OFF SUCH GOVERNMENT**, and to provide new guards for their future security.'

In acknowledging the truths set forth in this Declaration to be self-evident, your masters, in reducing you to slavery, are condemned as hypocrites and liars, out of their own mouths. By precept and example, they declare that it is both your right and your duty to wage war against them, and to wade through their blood, if necessary, to secure your own freedom. They glory in the revolutionary war, and greatly honor the names of those heroes who took up arms to destroy their oppressors. One of those heroes — Patrick Henry, of Virginia — exclaimed, 'Give me liberty, or give me death!' Another — Joseph Warren, of Massachusetts — said, 'My sons, scorn to be slaves!' Their cry was,

'Hereditary bondsmen! know ye not,

Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow?'

When, a few years since, the Poles rose in insurrection against the Russian power — and the Greeks rushed to the strife of blood against their Turkish oppressors — and the South Americans broke in pieces the Spanish yoke, and made themselves free and independent — your masters, in common with all the people of the North, cheered them on to the conflict, and sent them banners and arms to enable them to triumph in the cause of liberty — exclaiming,

‘ O, where ’s the slave, so lowly,
 Condemned to chains unholy,
 Who, could he burst his bonds at first,
 Would pine beneath them slowly? ’

Yet, should you attempt to regain your freedom in the same manner, you would be branded as murderers and monsters, and slaughtered without mercy! But the celebrated Thomas Jefferson, of Virginia, has truly said that, in such a contest, the Almighty has no attribute which can take side with your oppressors; and, though a slaveholder himself, he was forced many years ago to exclaim, in view of your enslavement,—‘ I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever; that considering numbers, nature, and natural means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation, is among possible events; that it may become probable by supernatural intereference!’ And he concluded by expressing the hope that the way was ‘preparing, under the auspices of Heaven, for a total emancipation, and that this was disposed, in the order of events, to be with the consent of the masters, rather than by their extirpation.’

Thomas Jefferson wrote in this manner more than sixty years since. At that period, your number was a little more than half a million; now it is more than two millions and a half. Sad and dreary has been your existence up to the present hour; and, doubtless, you have almost given up all hope of ever celebrating the day of jubilee — your own emancipation — on this side of the grave.

Take courage! Be filled with hope and comfort! — Your redemption draws nigh, for the Lord is mightily at work in your behalf. Is it not frequently the darkest before day-break? The word has gone forth that you shall be delivered from your chains, and it has not been spoken in vain.

Although you have many enemies, yet you have also

many friends — warm, faithful, sympathizing, devoted friends — who will never abandon your cause ; who are pledged to do all in their power to break your chains ; who are laboring to effect your emancipation without delay, in a peaceable manner, without the shedding of blood ; who regard you as brethren and countrymen, and fear not the frowns or threats of your masters. — They call themselves abolitionists. They have already suffered much, in various parts of the country, for rebuking those who keep you in slavery — for demanding your immediate liberation — for revealing to the people the horrors of your situation — for boldly opposing a corrupt public sentiment, by which you are kept in the great southern prison-house of bondage. Some of them have been beaten with stripes ; others have been stripped, and covered with tar and feathers ; others have had their property taken from them, and burnt in the streets ; others have had large rewards offered by your masters for their seizure ; others have been cast into jails and penitentiaries ; others have been mobbed and lynched with great violence ; others have lost their reputation, and been ruined in their business ; others have lost their lives. All these, and many other outrages of an equally grievous kind, they have suffered for your sakes, and because they are your friends. They cannot go to the South, to see and converse with you, face to face ; for, so ferocious and bloody-minded are your task-masters, they would be put to an ignominious death as soon as discovered. Besides, it is not necessary that they should incur this peril ; for it is solely by the aid of the people of the North, that you are held in bondage, and, therefore, they find enough to do at home, to make the people here your friends, and to break up all connexion with the slave system. They have proved themselves to be truly courageous, insensible to danger, superior to adversity, strong in principle, invincible in argument, animated by the spirit of impartial benevolence, unwearied in devising ways and means for your

deliverance, the best friends of the whole country, the noblest champions of the human race. Ten years ago, they were so few and feeble as only to excite universal contempt; now they number in their ranks, hundreds of thousands of the people. Then, they had scarcely a single anti-slavery society in operation; now they have thousands. Then, they had only one or two presses to plead your cause; now they have multitudes. — They are scattering all over the land their newspapers, books, pamphlets, tracts, and other publications, to hold up to infamy the conduct of your oppressors, and to awaken sympathy in your behalf. They are continually holding anti-slavery meetings in all parts of the free States, to tell the people the story of your wrongs. — Wonderful has been the change effected in public feeling, under God, through their instrumentality. Do not fear that they will grow weary in your service. They are confident of success, in the end. They know that the Lord Almighty is with them — that truth, justice, right, are with them — that you are with them. They know, too, that your masters are cowardly and weak, through conscious wrong-doing, and already begin to falter in their course. Lift up your heads, O ye despairing slaves! Yet a little while, and your chains shall snap asunder, and you shall be tortured and plundered no more! Then, fathers and mothers, your children shall be yours, to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Then, husbands and wives, now torn from each other's arms, you shall be reunited in the flesh, and man then shall no longer dare to put asunder those whom God hath joined together. Then, brothers and sisters, you shall be sold to the remorseless slave speculator no more, but dwell together in unity. 'God hasten that joyful day!' is now the daily prayer of millions.

The weapons with which the abolitionists seek to effect your deliverance are not bowie knives, pistols, swords, guns, or any other deadly implements. They

consist of appeals, warnings, rebukes, arguments and facts, addressed to the understandings, consciences and hearts of the people. Many of your friends believe that not even those who are oppressed, whether their skins are white or black, can shed the blood of their oppressors in accordance with the will of God; while many others believe that it is right for the oppressed to rise and take their liberty by violence, if they can secure it in no other manner; but they, in common with all your friends, believe that every attempt at insurrection would be attended with disaster and defeat, on your part, because you are not strong enough to contend with the military power of the nation; consequently, their advice to you is, to be patient, long-suffering, and submissive, yet awhile longer — trusting that, by the blessing of the Most High on their labors, you will yet be emancipated without shedding a drop of your masters' blood, or losing a drop of your own.

The abolitionists of the North are the only true and unyielding friends on whom you can rely. They will never deceive nor betray you. They have made your cause their own, and they mean to be true to themselves and to you, whatever may be the consequence. They are continually increasing in number, in influence, in enterprise and determination; and, judging from the success which has already attended their measures, they anticipate that, in a comparatively short period, the entire North will receive you with open arms, and give you shelter and protection, as fast as you escape from the South. We, who now address you, are united with them in spirit and design. We glory in the name of abolitionists, for it signifies friendship for all who are pining in servitude. We advise you to seize every opportunity to escape from your masters, and, fixing your eyes on the North star, travel on until you reach a land of liberty. You are not the property of your masters. God never made one human being to be owned by another. Your right to be free, at any moment, is undeniable; and

it is your duty, whenever you can, peaceably to escape from the plantations on which you are confined, and assert your manhood.

Already, within a few years, twenty thousand of your number have successfully run away, many of whom are now residing at the North, but a very large proportion of whom are living in Canada, enjoying safety and freedom under the British flag. To that country, the slave-hunters dare not go; nor will they much longer dare to come to the North, in pursuit of fugitive slaves. But, while we thus invite and encourage you to transform yourselves from things into men by flight, we would counsel you to use the utmost caution in attempting to escape; for many dangers yet lurk in the path of every fugitive, and should any of you be caught, you know that your fate would be a terrible one. Still, we assure you that there are now thousands in the free States to succor you, where, a few years since, scarcely an individual could be found to hide the outcast. If you come to us, and are hungry, we will feed you; if thirsty, we will give you drink; if naked, we will clothe you; if sick, we will administer to your necessities; if in prison, we will visit you; if you need a hiding-place from the face of the pursuer, we will provide one that even blood-hounds cannot scent out. This is the pledge we sacredly give to you.

We are not in favor of sending you to Africa, for we regard you as fellow-countrymen, and, with few exceptions, you have a right to claim this as your native land, for you were born on its soil. We do not, therefore, make your removal out of the country a condition of freedom, but demand for you all that we claim for ourselves — liberty, equal rights, equal privileges.

Your masters threaten that, if we do not stop pleading your cause, and assailing their slave system, they will dissolve the Union. Such a dissolution has for us no terrors; for we regard it as far preferable to a perpetuity of slavery. Such a dissolution you would have

no occasion to lament; for it would enable you to obtain your freedom and independence in a single day. — Your masters are only two hundred and fifty thousand in number; you are nearly three millions; and what could they do, if they should be abandoned to their fate by the North? If it were not now for the compact existing between the free and the slave States, by which the whole military power of the nation is pledged to suppress all insurrections, you would have long ere this been free. Your blood is the cement which binds the American Union together; your bodies are crushed beneath the massy weight of this Union; and its repeal or dissolution would ensure the downfall of slavery. — We tell your masters that we shall not be intimidated by their threats, but shall continue to expose their guilt, to rebuke their oppression, to agitate the public mind, to demand your release, until there shall be none to help them, and they be separated from all political and religious connexion with the people of the North — or (what we most earnestly desire as a matter of choice) until liberty be proclaimed throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof, with the hearty consent of the whole people.

Done in Faneuil Hall, May 31, 1843.

EDMUND QUINCY, *President.*

WILLIAM A. WHITE,	} <i>Secretaries.</i>
ELIZA J. KENNY,	
WM. P. ATKINSON,	

ADDRESS.

TO JOHN TYLER, *President of the United States.*

SIR: — With all the respect due to the President of the United States — with no intention or wish to give you any personal affront — but animated by the spirit of liberty, which impels us to seek the emancipation of all who are pining in slavery — we, the undersigned, inhabitants of New-England, desire to improve the opportunity presented by your visit to the metropolis of Massachusetts, to beseech you, in the sacred name of God, as an act of simple justice, as a duty which you are solemnly bound to discharge, instantly to liberate all your slaves, and to restore to them those inalienable rights, of which they have been unjustly deprived from their birth.

The existence of slavery in this republic is at war with all its principles and professions — a dark stain on its character — a visible curse on its prosperity — a horrible anomaly, which subjects the American people to the rebuke and opprobrium of the old world — and a dangerous element in our national organization, the speedy removal of which is essential to the preservation of the Union. It fills us with grief and shame as American citizens. We should deem ourselves unworthy of the name, if we did not seek its immediate annihilation by every lawful and christian instrumentality.

Sir, you are a slaveholder! Though you occupy the highest office in the gift of the people, yet you are a slaveholder! You subscribe to the declaration of independence, in which it is explicitly declared to be a self-evident truth, that the Creator has given to every human being an inalienable right to liberty; yet you are a slaveholder! You have sworn to support the Constitution of the United States, the design of which, according to its preamble, is 'to establish justice, and secure the blessings of liberty' to the people; yet you are a slaveholder! You profess to believe in the Christian religion, which requires that every man should love his neighbor as himself, and do to others what he would have them do to him; yet you are a slaveholder! In your messages to Congress you have denounced the African slave trade as piracy, and, consequently all who enslave Africans as pirates; yet you are a slaveholder! You have come from Washington to Boston, expressly to join with a great multitude of your fellow-countrymen in celebrating the completion of the Bunker Hill monument, which has been erected to commemorate the heroic deeds and to perpetuate the memories of those who bled and died in the cause of human liberty; yet you are a slaveholder!

Sir, we know not how to manifest a deeper interest in your welfare, or a higher regard for your reputation, or more fervent love for our country, than to ask you to break the chains of your slaves, and thus practically to acknowledge the rights of man. Such a beneficent example, set by you as the Chief Magistrate of this great republic, would go far, very far, toward effecting the entire abolition of slavery, and consequently, the emancipation of nearly three millions of the American people. It might subject you, temporarily, to the ridicule of the heartless, the curses of the profane, the contempt of the vulgar, the scorn of the proud, the hatred of the brutal, the rage of the selfish, the hostility of the powerful; but it would assuredly secure to you the applause and

admiration of the truly great and good, and render your name illustrious, to the latest posterity.

In the name, then, of justice and humanity — by the duty we all owe to the living God — we implore you to liberate our brethren, whom you hold in bondage.

Done in Faneuil Hall, May 31, 1843.

[The foregoing Address received the signatures of the members of the Convention individually.]